

# Journalists who became devotees of power institutions

23 NOVEMBER 2013

TRANSLATED BY: MEHRDAD SAFA

**KHABARNEGARAN.INFO-NIKI AZAD:** A CURSORY GLANCE AT IRANIAN NEWSPAPERS WOULD SIMPLY REVEAL THEIR POLICY.

REFORMIST NEWSPAPERS ARE FILLED WITH PHOTOS OF THE NEWLY ELECTED PRESIDENT AND HIS CABINET, OFTEN ACCOMPANIED BY ADMIRING REPORTS AND ARTICLES. THE NUMBER OF THEIR CRITICAL ARTICLES IS SEEN AS ALMOST NIL. NEWSPAPERS AFFILIATED WITH CONSERVATIVE PARTIES ARE, ON THE OTHER HAND, FILLED WITH HATEFUL, SLANDEROUS REPORTS.

WHAT FUNCTIONS DO JOURNALISTS SERVE IN THE MIDST OF CHANGES IN POLITICAL POWER? ARE THEY SUPPOSED TO ADMIRE POWER INSTITUTIONS OR INCITE HATRED? OR TO ENLIGHTEN PUBLIC OPINION AND CLOSELY MONITOR THE FUNCTIONING OF GOVERNMENTS?

HOW CLOSELY DO IRANIAN JOURNALISTS ADHERE TO JOURNALISM ETHICS AND STANDARDS, ESPECIALLY IN TIME OF POLITICAL POWER CHANGES? DO THEY APPLY DIFFERENT SELF-MADE PRINCIPLES TO CERTAIN PERIODS? SHOULD THEY, LIKE OTHER JOURNALISTS AROUND THE WORLD, ADHERE TO CERTAIN WELL-ESTABLISHED PRINCIPLES?

WE ASK A FEW EXPERIENCED IRANIAN JOURNALISTS, BOTH INSIDE AND OUTSIDE IRAN, ABOUT THESE ISSUES.

## **JOURNALISM MUST BE FREE OF INFATUATION, VIOLENCE**

ADMIRATION AND FLATTERING HAVE BECOME SO WIDESPREAD IN SOME REFORMIST NEWSPAPERS THAT HAS RAISED THE OBJECTION OF POLITICIANS AND ORDINARY PEOPLE TO THIS TREND. CONSERVATIVE NEWSPAPERS AFFILIATED WITH THE STATE, ON THE OTHER HAND, ARE NOW SPEAKING IN A MORE AGGRESSIVE TONE. "I AM TALKING MORE SPECIFICALLY TO JOURNALISTS. A MONOTONOUS ATMOSPHERE PREVAILS THAT DOESN'T LET US CRITICIZE MR. ROUHANI. ONCE AGAIN, WE WILL BE DEFEATED BECAUSE OF IDOLIZATION, MOSTLY DONE BY THE MEDIA," A FACEBOOK USER WROTE IN HIS PAGE.

"THE MAIN FUNCTION OF A JOURNALIST IS TO TRANSFER INFORMATION, AND IT SHOULD BE FASTER, MORE DETAILED AND MORE COMPREHENSIVE THAN OTHERS," SAYS REZA VEYSI, A RADIO FARDA REPORTER.

"A JOURNALIST IS NOT SUPPOSED TO ADMIRE OR INCITE HATRED AGAINST THOSE IN POWER. IT MAY BE A PRACTICE OF POLITICAL PROPAGANDISTS, BUT CERTAINLY NOT OF JOURNALISTS," HE ADDS.

PROFESSIONAL RESTRAINT AS A WAY OF COUNTERING FLATTERING, HATRED "POLITICAL CHANGES HAVE ALWAYS BEEN ACCOMPANIED BY CHANGES IN THE TONE OF NEWSPAPERS IN IRAN," SAYS IRANIAN JOURNALIST ALI ASGHAR RAMEZANPOUR.

"THIS IS A PART OF JOURNALISM DESTINY IN IRAN. WITH PRESIDENT ROUHANI COMING TO POWER, CONSERVATIVE DAILIES HAVE ADOPTED A SHARPER TONE. REFORMIST NEWSPAPERS HAVE ADOPTED A MORE OUTSPOKEN TONE. THESE CHANGES, DUE TO THE INNATE MANNER OF JOURNALISM IN IRAN, WILL COME WITH TWO TRANSFORMATIONS: RHETORIC AND POLEMIC ARGUMENTS, AND VIOLENT LANGUAGE," RAMEZANPOUR EXPLAINS.

"AND THE FIRST EVIDENT CASE OF THESE TWO FEATURES IS THE JOURNALISM OF THE CONSTITUTIONAL REVOLUTION," HE ADDS.

RAMEZANPOUR BELIEVES THAT JOURNALISM IS AN INSEPARABLE PART OF THE SOCIOPOLITICAL SETTING, AND CANNOT BE SEEN IN EXCLUSION.

“WE HAVE TO EDUCATE AND INFORM IRANIAN JOURNALISTS ABOUT THEIR BEHAVIOR, SO THAT WE CAN SWAY AWAY FROM PARTIAL TONE,” HE SAYS. “BUT LET’S NOT FORGET THAT IT IS RATHER IMPOSSIBLE TO DO THIS WITHOUT ENABLING POLITICAL PARTIES AND FREEDOM OF SPEECH,” RAMEZANPOUR STRESSES.

“THE IRANIAN JOURNALISTS HAVE LEARNT FROM HISTORY THAT AN IMPARTIAL JOURNALISM WILL BRING OUT TWO UNDESIRE EFFECTS. ONE IS THAT THEY CANNOT ATTRACT THRILLED AUDIENCE LOOKING FOR OPENNESS. THE OTHER IS THAT THEY WILL BE EXCLUDED FROM TEAM-MAKINGS OF POWER INSTITUTIONS, WHICH HIDE THEIR POLITICAL PROGRAMS BEHIND THE MEDIA,” HE EXPLAINS.

#### **JOURNALIST’S MONITORING OF POLITICAL POWER**

“IT’S BEEN A WHILE THAT I’VE BEEN LOOKING AT THE FLATTERING TONE OF FELLOW JOURNALISTS WHO ADMIRE GOVERNMENT AUTHORITIES AND THOSE IN POWER. I WONDER MYSELF ISN’T A JOURNALISM SUPPOSED TO MONITOR THOSE IN POWER,” SAYS IRANIAN JOURNALIST JILA BANİYAGHOOB, WHO HAS BEEN IMPRISONED BY GOVERNMENT AUTHORITIES AND SENTENCED TO A 30-YEAR WRITING BAN. “SOME OF MY FELLOW JOURNALISTS THINK THAT THEY HAVE TO ALWAYS EXCLAIM HURRAY FOR THE PRESIDENT WHO THEY HAVE VOTED FOR; THAT THEY HAVE TO ALWAYS ADMIRE HIS BEHAVIOR AND WORKS. THEY ACT LIKE THEY’RE THE PUBLIC RELATIONS PRACTITIONER OF THE PRESIDENT OR ONE OF HIS MINISTERS,” SHE CRITICIZES.

“I WISH TO TELL THEM IT’S OVER. YOU VOTED HIM THE PRESIDENT ON THE ELECTION DAY, AND NOW YOU’RE A JOURNALIST. PEOPLE EXPECT SOMETHING DIFFERENT FROM YOU IN THE MEDIA,” SHE EXPLAINS.

BANIYAGHOOB CRITICIZES HER FELLOW JOURNALISTS IN IRAN FOR THEIR ADMIRATION OF FOREIGN MINISTER MOHAMMAD JAVAD ZARIF, WHO IS RARELY CRITICIZED IN THE MEDIA.

“FOR EXAMPLE WHEN UN HUMAN RIGHTS HIGHER COMMISSIONER ASKED ZARIF ABOUT THE SITUATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS IN IRAN, HE SOMEHOW QUESTIONED THE AHMAD SHAHID’S REPORT ON HUMAN RIGHTS IN IRAN,” SHE EXPLAINS, “HOWEVER, ALMOST NO ONE ASKED MR. ZARIF THAT IS REALLY IRAN FREE OF HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS.”

[HTTP://KhabarNegaran.info/article.php3?id\\_article=2632](http://khabarnegaran.info/article.php3?id_article=2632)